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TMC THE MONTHLY CRISIS
001
FINAL CRISIS - BEST OF 2008

TMC Contents

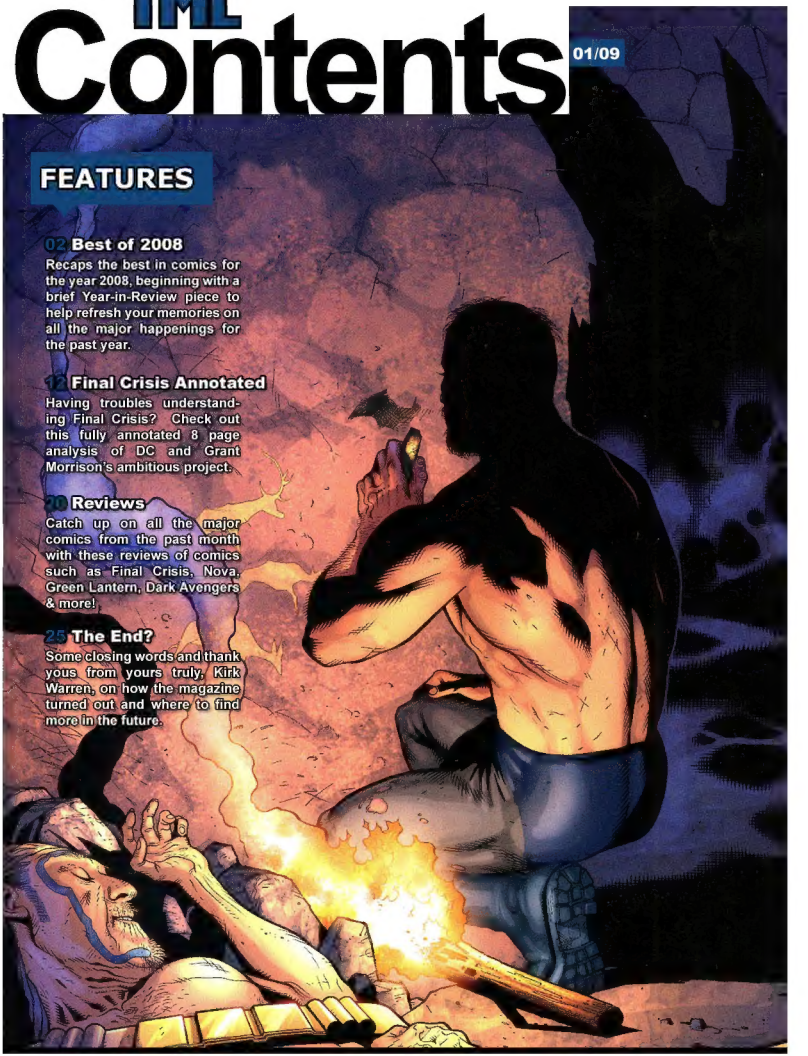
FEATURES

02 Best of 2008
Recaps the best in comics for the year 2008, beginning with a brief Year-in-Review piece to help refresh your memories on all the major happenings for the past year.

12 Final Crisis Annotated
Having troubles understanding Final Crisis? Check out this fully annotated 8 page analysis of DC and Grant Morrison's ambitious project.

20 Reviews
Catch up on all the major comics from the past month with these reviews of comics such as Final Crisis, Nova, Green Lantern, Dark Avengers & more!

25 The End?
Some closing words and thank yous from yours truly, Kirk Warren, on how the magazine turned out and where to find more in the future.



YEAR-IN-REVIEW

RECAPPING THE BEST & WORST OF 2008

Before moving on to the **Best of 2008** awards, I wanted to take a brief moment to recap some of the bigger news stories and events from the past year.

BRAND NEW DAY

It's easy to forget that the year started off with a supposedly brand new day for the **Spider-Man** titles, which went thrice monthly and featured a Peter Parker that made a deal with the devil to retcon the past 30+ years away. While reactions were mixed starting out, it seems most of fandom has given up complaining about their favourite wallcrawler's current status quo.

HULK SEES RED

After the success of **World War Hulk**, Marvel handed over the keys to the Hulk mobile to one **Jeph Loeb**, who promptly shat all over the title and character with a new red Hulk and a regression of the Hulk to his mindless brute persona. One good thing to come out of the debacle was the rechristening of Incredible Hulk to **Incredible Hercules**.

NOT SO SECRET INVASION

April saw the release of Marvel's **Secret Invasion**, which dominated the sales charts for the year, despite it's dubious, **Michael Bay**-like broad strokes, light on story focus.

DC's FINAL CRISIS

Following hot on the heels of Marvel's **Secret Invasion** was **Grant Morrison's** love child, **Final Crisis**, which quickly split fandom in half, in terms of love it or hate it, and was no sales slouch itself.

BATMAN: RIP (HE GOT BETTER)

June saw yet another much hyped **Grant Morrison** event, this time one, **Batman: RIP**, which had promised the death of Batman, among other things. Much like **Final Crisis**, and all of Morrison's recent work, it split fandom, and reviewers, in half over whether they loved it or hated it.

SDCC

July saw the return of the annual **San Diego Comic-Con** and, with it, numerous announcements and surprises concerning upcoming events, with **DC** having the strongest showing. Among those announced were **War of Kings** from **Marvel**, **Neil Gaiman** and **Kevin Smith** on seperate **Batman** projects, DC's acquisition of the **Archie** and **Milestone** characters, **Flash: Rebirth**, **Blackest Night** and the **Battle for the Cowl** from DC, an **Incredibles** comic from **Boom Studios** and many more.

FINAL CRISIS FOR FINAL CRISIS

The biggest news of the summer was DC's announced delays of **Final Crisis** and their decision to bring in artists, **Carlos Pacheco** and **Doug Mahnke**, to help finish the final three issues.

PA KENT BUYS THE FARM

October saw the conclusion to **Action Comics' Brainiac** storyline and, with it, the death of **Superman's** adoptive father, **Jonathan Kent**.

ULTIMATE FAILURE

This year also saw the failure of the Ultimate line, starting with **Kirkman's Ultimate X-Men** run and, ultimately, ending with **Jeph Loeb's** literal and figurative destruction of the Ultimate Universe in **Ultimates 3** and it's follow-up, **Ultimatum**. As someone who returned to comics around the time the Ultimate line launched, it's sad to see it fall so far.

2009 LOOKS BRIGHT

While 2008 was mostly gloom and doom for the big news makers, 2009 looks very promising with many of the projects announced at **SDCC** and **Dark Reign**, from Marvel, is off to a solid start as well. DC looks to have a big year planned for a change and I'm looking forward to that the most.

BEST COVER
ANNIHILATION: CONQUEST 5

Runners-Up:
Daredevil 105
Y: The Last Man 60
Detective Comics 850
Fables 71

For this year's awards, I decided to change the **Best Cover Artist** award into a **Best Cover** nomination.

While I thought it might be easier to narrow down the nominations with this method, it actually ended up making my job that much harder as I had to scour through hundreds of comic book covers looking for the covers I believed were the most deserving of recognition this year.

However, with so many covers to choose from, there was only one clear winner in my eyes, and I actually called it back in January or February when the cover was first solicited. And that winner was **Annihilation: Conquest #5**, a masterful cover showing off a victorious **Ultron** sitting upon his Technarch throne, beautifully rendered by **Aleksi Briclot**.

For the runners-up, I choose **Daredevil #105, Y: The Last Man #60, Detective Comics #850 and Fables #71**.

While I'm sure everyone has their own favourite covers from the past year, I'm sure we can all agree that the **Annihilation: Conquest** cover stands head and shoulders above the rest and is the rightful winner of this year's **Cover of the Year**.

BEST STORYLINE OR EVENT

THE SEVEN CAPITAL CITIES OF HEAVEN

Runners-Up:
Thunderbolts: Caged Angels
Wolverine: Get Mystique!
Black Panther: See Wakanda and Die
Blue Beetle: Endgame

For the Immortal Weapons and the Army of Thunder, this is a battle not just for our lives, but for our homes.
BASTARD'S BLACK HEARTCRUSHER
STOMPING GIANT SLAP
Hydra fights like they're picking up a paycheck.

It was a toss up between Iron Fist's **Seven Capital Cities of Heaven** fighting tournament arc and the insanity that engulfed Thunderbolt Mountain in Thunderbolts' **Caged Angels** storyline, but, in the end, I had to give the **Best Storyline or Event** award to **Immortal Iron Fist** for the sheer ability to make a super hero kung-fu tournament in mystical cities concept work so well.

Caged Angels, while highly entertaining, seemed to rely heavily on the shock value of Ellis' insanity let loose and, other than the bouts of insanity, didn't really deliver the epic moments, drama and ups and downs that the rollercoaster ride Seven Capital Cities saga entailed.

Heck, **Iron Fist** gets in a fight with a bullet train and wins, for crying out loud! Add in all the flashbacks to Orson's past, the various other Immortal Weapons and the rebellion by the Thunderer and this all added up to one of the best self-contained stories I've ever read and I never thought I'd say that about a "kung-fu comic".

BEST WRITER
DAN ABNETT & ANDY LANNING

Runners-Up:
Jason Aaron
Ed Brubaker
Geoff Johns
Matt Fraction

Even if **Green Lantern** hadn't disappointed with a year long origin rehashing, I doubt **Johns** could have pulled out a win over my choice(s?) for the Best Writer award.

Simply put, **Abnett & Lanning**, collectively known as DnA, tore it up this year with not only the consistenly amazing **Nova**, but the successful launch of yet another cosmic space title, **Guardians of the Galaxy**, and a strong, if flawed, showing in their first event book, **Annihilation: Conquest**.

BEST ARTIST
WELLINTON ALVES

Runners-Up:
Dustin Nguyen
Rafael Albuquerque
Marcos Martin

Providing the sweep of the creative team awards for the **Nova** book is artist, **Wellinton Alves**.

As always, I judge artists on workload and keeping schedules - not two issues per year "popular" artists.

In this regard, Alves is there month in and month out providing stellar art, such as the **Silver Surfer vs Nova** image to the right, and is an amazing talent that does not get the recognition he deseves.

BEST PUBLISHER
MARVEL COMICS

Runners-Up:
DC Comics

Again, **Marvel** comes out on top for the **Best Publisher** award.

That's not to say Marvel is superior, but it is as if, what with things such as **Countdown**, **Trinity** and the like, DC is content to shoot themselves in the foot, leaving Marvel the only possible choice for this award.

Hopefully one of these companies steps up in 2009 with an effort deserving of the award.

BEST SINGLE ISSUE
FINAL CRISIS: REQUIEM

Runners-Up:
All Star Superman 10
Y: The Last Man 60
JLA: New Frontier Special 1
Avengers: The Initiative 13

Every year, there's that one book that jumps out at you and refuses to let you go. It can be an epic, action packed conclusion to one of the best events of the year, such as 2007's **Sinestro Corps War** ending **Green Lantern #25**, or it can be like this year's winner, **Final Crisis: Requiem**, a touching tribute to a character with decades of history and baggage, who was killed off-panel in the name of shock value killing in a big ticket event book.

My review of Requiem had nothing but good things to say about it and I would only be repeating myself if I were to continue to heap praise on this book here. Say what you will about how **Final Crisis** eventually turned out, but let it be known that this issue, written by **Peter Tomasi** with art by **Doug Mahnke**, more than made up for any shortcomings the main title had and was the one, and only, choice for my **Best Single Issue** award.

MOMENT OF THE YEAR

NORMAN GONE WILD (Thunderbolts: Caged Angels)

Runners-Up:
Iron Man vs Mandarin (Iron Man 28)
Yorrick's Escape (Y: The Last Man 60)
Chocolate Egg Creams (Black Adam 6)
Superman vs Batman (JLA: New Frontier)

Technically, I wanted to give this award to all the insanity that enveloped Thunderbolt Mountain during the **Caged Angels** storyline, but such a broad stroke classification defeats the purpose of the moment aspect of this award, which should be relegated to a single crowning moment.

As such, I settled on the return of the **Green Goblin** and his wanton disregard for human life as he tosses pumpkin gifts to random guards, crucifies **Swordsman** and nearly kills **Songbird** before finally being taken down. We'd been waiting **Ellis'** entire run for Norman to finally let loose and it was worth the wait.

While Norman's rampage was an easy decision for top honours, that doesn't mean the runners-up were slouches either.

The **Iron Man vs Mandarin** fight in **Iron Man #28** was nothing short of epic and ended with Tony, literally, ripping the rings, which were embedded in the Mandarin's spinal chord, from the his back.

I couldn't leave out **Yorrick's** escape from captivity in final issue **Y: The Last Man**, as the image of the floating straight jacket was a beautiful ending to the series.

Black Adam regaining his magic word, which was Chocolate Egg Creams, of all things, is an overlooked moment by most, too.

Finally, **Darwyn Cooke** depicted an amazing battle between **Superman** and **Batman** in his **JLA: New Frontier Special**.

For the second year in a row, **Iron Man** comes out on top for my **Best Hero** award.

While it's common practice to hate on the man of iron, he was one of the few heroes to actually combat evil this year, primarily in his own title against his arch-nemesis, the **Mandarin**, but also as the Director of SHIELD, where he was literally everywhere.

He also wins by virtue of everyone else slacking or being tied up in events that went nowhere.

BEST HERO
IRON MAN

Runners-Up:
Nova
Captain America
Superman
Iron Fist

Best Villain was much easier to choose than the Hero this year, primarily because Norman stepped up big when it counted, going nuts and nearly wiping out his own **Thunderbolts** in **Caged Angels** and, later, "saving" the world by killing the **Skrull Queen**, which allowed him to fool the world into handing over the keys to the kingdom, making him the new director of **HAMMER**, the world defense force replacing **SHIELD**.

BEST VILLAIN
NORMAN OSBORN

Runners-Up:
Jeph Loeb
The Red Skull
The Mandarin

Were any events good this year? **Secret Invasion**? Bloated, tie-in inflated, Benis-speak filled "invasion" where years of planning ended with a fist fight in Central Park.

Final Crisis? **Grant Morrison** may be the only one that understands it. Maybe.

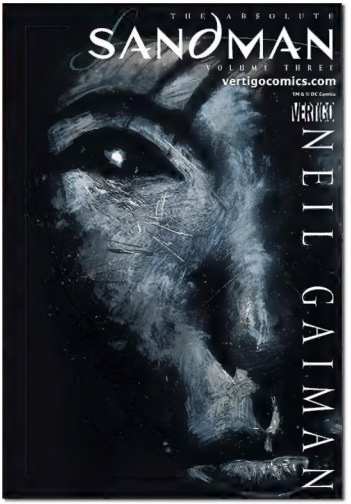
Annihilaton:Conquest, **Batman: RIP**, **JSA: Thy Kingdom Come, etc**? I can't think of any event that actually delivered.

BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT
EVENT BOOKS

Runners-Up:
Green Lantern
Loeb's Ultimates 3
Cancelled Books & Creators Leaving Low Selling Titles

BEST COLLECTION
ABSOLUTE SANDMAN VOL 3 & 4

Runners-Up:
Sinestro Corps War HC
Fables: The Covers HC



While **Green Lantern's Sinestro Corps War** was the best event from last year and I had been awaiting this hardcover treatment since I first started reading that story, it didn't really stand a chance against what I, arguably, consider the greatest comic book series ever written, **The Sandman**, and an **Absolute** version of said comic to boot.

BEST COMIC BOOK MOVIE
IRON MAN

Runners-Up:
The Dark Knight
JLA: The New Frontier
Wanted

I'll probably receive some flak for this one, but, as a *comic book movie*, I just plain enjoyed **Iron Man** more than **The Dark Knight** and that's why I'm giving it the **Best Comic Book Movie** award.

I concede that The Dark Knight is probably a better *movie*, but, as a comic book adaptation, I find it, and the entire Nolanverse, lacking.

I've also watched and re-watched each movie several times since the DVDs came out and I find myself liking TDK less and less with each viewing, whereas with Iron Man, it's simply enjoyable super hero fun every time.

Either way, both were great movies and deserving of recognition, but, for my money, Iron Man came out on top.

I was actually late picking up **Captain Britain & MI 13** as it was launched as a Secret Invasion tie-in and featured a cast of characters that have never exactly thrilled me.

After hearing so many good things and constantly seeing amazing moments in the **MotW**, I had to track down the back issues and I was blown away by how good this series was and it is, hands down, the **Best New Book** to come out of 2008.

BEST NEW BOOK
CAPTAIN BRITAIN & MI 13

Runners-Up:
Guardians of the Galaxy
Secret Six
Incredible Hercules

Sky Doll is everything **Final Crisis** wishes it was. It manages to tell a deep, thought provoking story ladden with symbolism in which no two readers will interpret the same way and rewards multiple readings while simultaneously being a genuinely fun and interesting story that anyone can enjoy in a single read.

Easily one of the best comics I have ever read and it took home the **Best Mini-Series** award with ease.

BEST MINI-SERIES
SKY DOLL

Runners-Up:
Rogues' Revenge
I Kill Giants
Thor: Ages of Thunder Trilogy

BEST ONGOING
NOVA

Runners-Up:
Captain America
Incredible Hercules
Action Comics
Thor

With the **Best Writer** and **Artist** awards already under its belt, I'm pretty sure most people saw this pick coming a mile away.

Nova, while stellar since it re-launched after the original Annihilation event, had been subjected to event tie-in after event tie-in for most of its first year, going from **Annihilation** to **Civil War** and back to **Annihilation: Conquest**.

With its second year, Nova was able to spread its wings and wow us with fun and original space stories, the likes of which we hadn't seen in decades and had only been touched upon briefly between events in the first year.

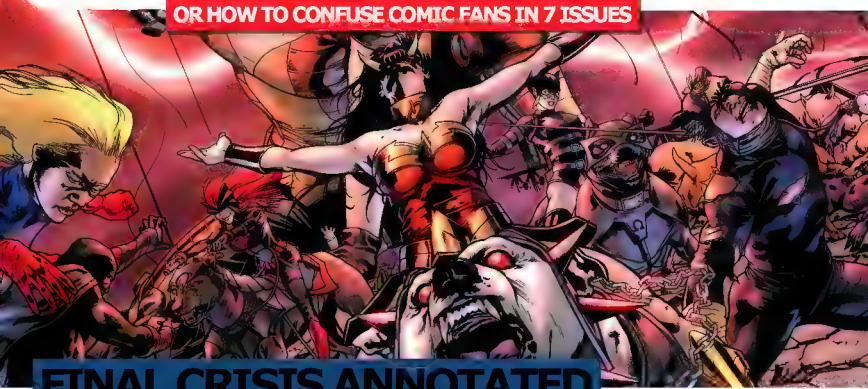
Whether it be fighting for his life at the ends of the universe in a giant, decapitated **Celestial** head or making small talk with a telepathic, Russian canine or going toe to toe with the **Silver Surfer** in an attempt to stay **Galactus'** hand for but the briefest of moments, Nova had it all this year.

Oh, and did I mention it was on time every month with stellar writing and art when most high profile books have trouble making a bi-monthly schedule, let alone monthly?

Protect space? Be a star? Join the Corps? All I can say is, sign me up!

Final Crisis

OR HOW TO CONFUSE COMIC FANS IN 7 ISSUES



FINAL CRISIS ANNOTATED

What the heck did I just read?

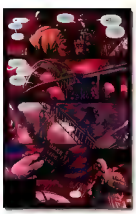
Note how the cave paintings are similar to what Batman draws in FC #7.

FINAL CRISIS #1

Cover - Features cave paintings of **Batman, Superman** and **Wonder Woman** egos, foreshadowing Batman in the past at the end of FC #7.

Pages 01-04 - Metron gives **Anthro, the First Boy**, the power of knowledge in the form of how to create fire.

Pages 05-07 - Anthro uses fire as a weapon to defeat **Vandal Savage**, the first super-villain.



It's never explained how or why Question knows about the Dark Side Club.

Pages 12-13 - Dan Turpin meets with the new, female **Question**, who sets him on the path to the **Dark Side Club** as a tip for his missing children case.

Pages 14-15 - John Stewert meets with **Hal Jordan** at the site of Orion's death. Code 1011 is revealed as deaide the death of a god. **The Guardians** quarantine Earth and dispatch the **Alpha Lanterns** to investigate. (See **Green Lantern: Alpha Lanterns** for more on the Alpha Lanterns.)

Through these Anti-Life infected children, Darkseid comes to possess Turpin's body.

Page 21 - Bludhaven was destroyed in **Infinite Crisis #4. Reverend Good** is the evil New God, **Glorious Godfrey.**

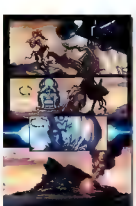
Pages 22-23 - Boss Dark Side is the current human host for **Darkseid**. (See **Seven Soldiers: Mister Miracle** for more on this.)

Kalibak and **Kanto** are New Gods as well.

Pages 24-25 - The **JLA** have a meeting to inform everyone about Orion's death and give updates to the reader on what New Gods are while the **Alpha Lanterns** quarantine Earth.

Pages 08-09 - Dan Turpin, on the case of six missing children, discovers the body of the fallen **Orion**, who proceeds to tell him there was a war in heaven and evil won. The **Black Racer** is seen above them, signifying Orion's death. The skies begin to turn red.

Pages 10-11 - John Stewert receives a code 1011 from his ring, signifying the death of Orion.



Metron gives Anthro the gift of knowledge in the form of fire.

Pages 16-17 - Dr Light and **Mirror Master** recover Metron's chair for **Libra.**

Pages 18-20 - Libra meets with the major villains of the DCU in an attempt to recruit them into his new **Secret Society** in preparation for Darkseid's return. To prove his right to lead them, he murders the **Martian Manhunter** as a gift for Z-list villain, The **Human Flame** (See **Final Crisis: Requiem** for more on this).

Parallels could be drawn between both Metron and Libra's "gifts" of fire.

Pages 26-28 - The Monitors strip **Nix Uotan** of his memories and banish him to New Earth to live out his life as a mortal after the destruction of his domain, Earth-51, during **Countdown**, which nearly caused the destruction of the Multiverse.

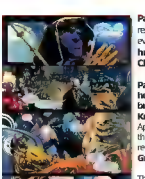
The Monitor in the final panel is **Solomon** from Countdown.

Pages 27-28 - A flashback to **Anthro** painting the New God symbol of freedom, which he saw during his encounter with **Metron**. Anthro then has a vision of **Kamandi, the Last Boy.**

Nix Uotan, Monitor of Earth-51, is banished and forced to live life as a mortal.

Contrast this page with the Uotan waking up at the end of Final Crisis #7.

Page 29 - Nix Uotan awakes in his new mortal body to the sound of the television where **Green Arrow** is condemning the villains that murdered **Martian Manhunter**, confirming his death from earlier in the issue.



Luthor refuses to join until Libra hurts Superman. Clayface expresses enthusiasm and is later used to blow up the Daily Planet.

Pages 13-14 - Lex Luthor remains unimpressed by **Libra**, even after killing **Martian Manhunter**. That is the original **Clayface** next to Luthor

Pages 15-16 - Martian Manhunter impersonated **Blockbuster** in **Salvation Run**. **Kraken** was originally from Apokolips, home of Darkseid and the evil New Gods. Later, it is revealed she is possessed by **Granny Goodness**.

The "Kirby Krackle" effect as Wonder Woman goes to touch Kraken probably signifies her being possessed by a New God.

Of note, **Batman** indicates he sent **Flash** to check on a potential link between **Orion** and **Jonn's** deaths. This is followed up on later in the issue.

Libra extends his hand towards Superman as Clayface blows up the Daily Planet.

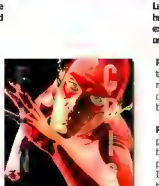
Pages 26-27 - Clayface infiltrates the Daily Planet as **Jimmy Olsen** and plants a bomb on Libra's orders from earlier in the issue.

Of note, **Lois** indicates she was working on the same missing children's case that **Turpin** was and sent "Jimmy" to deliver the story to the printers for her

FINAL CRISIS #2

Pages 01-03 - Introduces the heroes that will later become the new **Forever People**, the **Super Young Team**, and Japanese super hero culture on the whole.

Pages 04-06 - This scene mirrors **Sonny Sumo's** original **Jack Kirby** origin where he would fight for money and suffered serious burns while fighting a cyborg-like opponent.



Flash graced the cover of FC #2, most likely alluding to the return of Barry Allen.

Page 17 - Radion is poisonous to New Gods and extremely rare. The age of the concrete is due to **Darkseid** firing the bullet back through time.

Page 18 - Stewart throws a punch before being taken out, but the assailant catches the punch with their own right hand. It leaves an imprint of his ring in the assailant's fist, which **Batman** picks up on later in the issue.

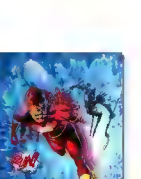
Page 19 - Alpha Lanterns were created as an internal affairs-like group for the Green Lantern and that is why they are the ones arresting **Hal**.

John Stewart finds a radion bullet embedded in 50 year old concrete at the scene of Orion's death.

Page 28-29 - Libra's hideout is a rundown strip club. This used to be Cantrell City Community Center, stomping grounds of **Barry Allen**.

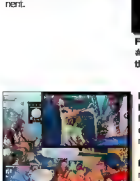
The concept of a bullet fired backwards through time is introduced here as **Flash** recounts what **Batman** told him. Due to a time paradox later in the series, the Flashes actually give **Darkseid** the ability to fire the bullet through time.

Page 30 - The issue began with the word, "Stop", and ends with, "Run", in a unique bit of contrast.



Barry Allen "died" in the original crisis and is seen chasing the bullet that killed Orion. **Black Racer**, seen chasing Barry, is the New God version of death

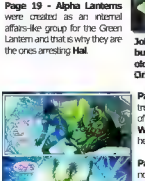
Barry Allen returns with death hot on his heels.



The sketches of people from across the Multiverse include Mandrakk, Overman, Overgirl and Captain Adam.

Pages 07-08 - Shilo Norman is the new **Mister Miracle**. (See **Seven Soldiers: Mister Miracle** for more on this.)

Page 09 - Nix Uotan, in his mortal form, struggles with mundane life. He draws pictures of heroes and villains from across the Multiverse while trying to remember who he is. Those pictured are **Overman, Overgirl, Captain Adam** and **Mandrakk, the Dark Monitor**. (See **FC: Superman Beyond** for more on those characters.)



Kraken is revealed to be possessed by Granny Goodness and captures Batman for learning her secret.

Page 20 - The purple ray treatment **Superman** speaks of is a healing machine **Wonder Woman** created in her first appearance.

Pages 21-22 - Batman notices the ring imprint and cracked gauntlet of **Kraken** and realizes she's the one that attacked John Stewart.

It is also revealed **Kraken** is possessed by **Granny Goodness**, although the wording of the dialogue can be misinterpreted as Kraken working for Granny.

Supergirl gets the focus of the third cover, despite barely appearing. Most likely references Overgirl's appearance in this issue.

FINAL CRISIS #3

Pages 01-02 - The Question, checking in on **Dan Turpin** and the missing children case, is at the **Dark Side Club**.

Frankenstein was revamped by **Grant Morrison** in his recent **Seven Soldiers: Frankenstein** series. SHADE, the Super Human Advanced Defence Executive, first appeared that same series.

Of note, **Boss Dark Side's** body, which has been "mummified", is due to the wear and tear of hosting **Darkseid's** essence. Turpin's body was showing similar signs of decay already.

Pages 10-11 - The mind control hats **Mad Hatter** speaks of here are the **Justifier** helmets used to spread Anti-Life later in the series.

Page 12 - Funeral for the **Martian Manhunter** (See **Final Crisis: Requiem** for more on this.) Heroes present include:

Panel 1: Booster Gold, Mr. Terrific, Hal Jordan, Zatanna, Vixen, Kyle Rayner, Red Tornado, Stargirl, Wonder Woman.
Panel 2: John Stewart, Wildcat, Black Lightning, Doctor Mid-Nite, Hourman, Superman, Alan Scott, Geo-Force, Black Canary, Flash.
Panel 3: Hawkman, Hawkgirl, Green Arrow, Firestorm, Metamorpho, Batman, Red Arrow, Power Girl

It is here we find out that the Mad Hatter has created the Justifier Anti-Life Equation helmets for Darkseid.

Page 23-24 - Reverend Good, the personification of the New God, **Glorious Godfrey**, escorts **Turpin** into Command Bunker D, where **Kamandi** is seen behind bars, pleading for help from Turpin.

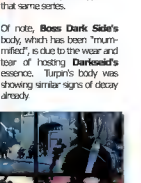
Page 25 - Kraken, Mister Simyan and **Mister Mokkari**, of which the latter two share their original New God names, welcome Turpin as they would **Darkseid**, despite Turpin's continued resistance.

Batman can be seen captured in the background, having been transported here through Kraken's Boom Tube. On the operating table is the new body being created for Darkseid's son, **Kalibak**.

Kalibak's new body can be seen being bio-engineered by Makkari and Simyan as a captive Batman looks on.

Page 03 - Father Time is the commander of **SHADE**. He is seen speaking with **Taleb Beni Khalid**, the Black King of **Checkmate**, about future plans for the **Question**. This is foreshadowing to her role in gathering the army of Supermen from the Multiverse later in the series.

The **Source Wall** makes an appearance at the Dark Side Club. It takes on the form of a computer mouse hand pointer-like interface and spells out, "Know Evil" on the wall. This is the "Ark of the Covenent" Time was speaking of on this page. **Kirby's** original version was of a finger writing a flaming message to the New Gods.



Boss Dark Side has seen better days as several of Morrison's Seven Soldiers plots come together.

Contrast this page with the Uotan waking up at the end of Final Crisis #7.

Page 04 - The meteor-like object that fell last page turns out to be **Overgirl**, a Supergirl from Earth-10, where Nazi Germany found **Superman** and used his ship's technology to win WW2

Translation of what **Overgirl** said - "I...I...I'm Overgirl. No. Heaven is.. bleeding, Hell...has...has won."

Page 05 - The Monitor, **Zillo Valla**, can be seen in the background watching **Uotan**.

The cave painting is the same one **Anthro** drew in issue one. The people that found the painting are **Calvin Carson** and his team from **Brave and the Bold #31.**

The new All-Star Squadron, made up of members from the JLA, JSA, Titans, Teen Titans, Shadowpact and more.

Page 18 - The new **All-Star Squadron** includes, starting in the upper left and working to the bottom right:

Bombshell, Cyclone, Firestorm, Raven, Blue Beetle, Starfire, Bat girl, Metamorpho, Geo-Force, Blue Devil, Red Devil, Amazing Man, Zatanna, Aquaman, Red Arrow, Supergirl, Thunderbolt, Wildcat Jr, Green Arrow, Liberty Belle, Hourman, Black Lightning, Vixen, Mr Terrific, Animal Man, Enchantress, Ragman, Black Canary, Wildcat, Sasha Bordeaux, Dr Mid-Nite, Katana, Hawkgirl, Steel, Damage, Nightwing, Wonder Girl, Red Tornado, Atom, Robin, Stargirl, Jay Garrick, Power Girl, Argent, Donna Troy, Huntress, Captain Marvel, Hawkman, Detective Chimp, and Alan Scott

Darkseid was featured on issue four's cover to represent "the day evil won".

FINAL CRISIS #4

Pages 01-02 - Setting is back to the release of the Anti-Life Equation and shows the ease at which **Darkseid** assumed control (last issue ended in the future with the **Flashes**).

Page 03 - With all technology under Darkseid control, **The Ray**, with his ability to travel as light, delivers newspapers world wide.

Page 04 - Tattooed Man was rescued by the Ray and brings word (and Metron's circuit) from **Black Lightning.** (See **Final Crisis: Submit** for more).

Pages 06-09 - Jay Garrick's story takes them back in time to the death of **Orion** and ends after **Turpin** finds the body in issue one.

Page 10 - Libra has relocated the **Secret Society** to the Hall of Doom. (See McDuffie's **JLA: Injustice League** for more).

He unveils the new **Justifier** helmets, which **Mad Hatter** designed. They are variations of the original Justifier helmets from **Forever People #3**.

Libra unveils the new Justifier helmets to the unwitting Human Flame.

Page 11 - Luthor walks in on **Libra** and the **Human Flame** and Libra gives him the ultimatum to join willingly or be enslaved.

Page 19 - Of note, **Shilo Norman** mentions crawling out of a grave. This is reference to **Seven Soldiers #1**.

Page 21 - The **Wonder Wagon** the **Super Young Team** use is most likely named after the **Whiz Wagon** from the old **Jimmy Olsen** comics.

Page 22 - Sgt Grayle is either **Gardner Grayle** from the original **Atomic Knights** stories or named after him.

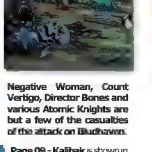
Page 23 - Wonder Woman has actually seen a man turned inside out before and it happened in **Wonder Woman #247.**

The Wonder Wagon makes its debut and the Super Young Team make themselves useful for once.

Page 05 - The Ray reveals they are printing the newspapers at the **Fortress of Solitude.** The paper shows a headline about an attack on Bludhaven.

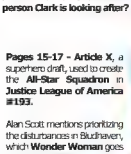
Pages 06-07 - The results of the attack on Bludhaven are shown in the form of dead bodies littered about a battlefield.

The dead include **Negative Woman**, the White Queen of **Checkmate**, **Count Vertigo**, Negative Woman's Knight, **Director Bones,** of the D.E.O. (See Manhunter for more) and assorted Checkmate Pawns and **Atomic Knights**.



Negative Woman, Count Vertigo, Director Bones and various Atomic Knights are but a few of the casualties of the attack on Bludhaven.

Page 08 - Recaps what **Maikari, Simyan, Reverend Good** and **Granny Goodness** have been up to while Darkseid incubates in Turpin's body



Just who is this Louise person Clark is looking after?

Pages 12-13 - Zillo Valla shows up with an offer to save Lois if **Superman** will help her (See **FC: Superman Beyond** for more).

On page 13, Lois' hospital tag on her wrist shows her name as Louis or Louise, which makes me wonder if Superman even knows who his wife is anymore.

Page 14 - The **Alpha Lanterns** escort **Hal Jordan** to Oa for trial. He is suffering from memory loss in regards to his whereabouts when **John Stewart** and **Opto** were attacked as well as when Orion was killed.

Mary's new look post-Countdown is due to the influence of Desaad.

Pages 24-27 - The new **Mary Marvel** is introduced. It is later revealed she is possessed by the New God, **Desaad**.

Replika, the man who was killed, is also from Morrison's **Seven Soldiers** series.

The virus that affects **Wonder Woman** removes other heroes' powers and she becomes the carrier, which is why **Darkseid** will later call her his **Plague Goddess**.

Page 28 - Mokkari sends the **Anti-Life Equation** to every email address on Earth in the form of a self-opening computer virus.

Kalibak is reborn in a tiger-man body, remeniscent of the tiger civilization in Jack Kirby's Kamandi.

Page 09 - Kalibak is shown in his new man-tiger body eating the corpse of **Green Lantern Opto.** (See **Final Crisis #2** for more on Opto's capture.)

Pages 10-11 - More exposition from **Tattooed Man** explaining what happened in **Final Crisis: Submit.**

The informant from **Libra's** group that **Oracle** mentions is later revealed as **Lex Luthor**.

Pages 12-13 - Hawkgirl is fighting an Anti-Life controlled **Silver Swan.** Using the Untemet, which **Oracle** mentioned earlier, **Alan Scott** organizes Earth's final strike against Darkseid

Pages 15-17 - Article X, a superhero draft, used to create the **All-Star Squadron** in **Justice League of America #193.**

Alan Scott mentions prioritizing the disturbances in Bludhaven, which **Wonder Woman** goes to check out in latter pages.

Of note, **Tawky Tawny** contemplates getting his jetpack and joining the frey, which he eventually does in **Final Crisis #6.** Also, the cat **Supergirl** is petting is named Streaks, in reference to **Streaky the Super Cat**.

Morrison has stated that this new Aquaman is from another Earth.

Pages 29-30 - Wally and **Barry** arrive several weeks into the future to find the world overrun by Anti-Life and are confronted by the new Furies.

The Furies were a team of female New Gods that operated under **Granny Goodness**. These new Furies are not possessed like Mary or Kraken, but they do bear striking resemblance to the previous Furies.

Wonder Woman is in the role of Bernadeth, **Catwoman** is Lashina, **Giganta** is Stompa, and **Batwoman** is Mad Harriet.

The new Furies - Wonder Woman, Giganta, Batwoman & Catwoman.

The hero's pictured on screen are, starting in top left:

Ravager, Starman, Blue Devil, Huntress, The Atom, Enchantress, Robotman, Uncle Sam, Wildcat, Hippolyta, Superman (MIA See FC: Superman Beyond), Batman (MIA captured by Kraken/Granny Goodness), Cyborg, Martian Manhunter (Deceased See Final Crisis #1), Guy Gardner (Offworld on Oa for Hal's trial), Hawkgirl, Hourman, Hal Jordan (Offworld arrested and taken to Oa for trial), Dr Fate, Power Girl, Flash (MIA in the future with Barry Allen See Final Crisis #2), John Stewart, Sandman, Black Canary, Kingdom Come Superman of Earth-22, Robin, Red Tornado, Phantom Lady, Starfire, Liberty Belle, Green Arrow, Black Lightning (MIA is actually corrupted See FC: Submit), Aquaman, Firestorm, Kyle Rayner (Offworld on Oa for Hal's trial)

Alan Scott takes note of the heroes available for their last ditch effort.

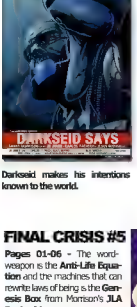
Page 14 - Glimpses of the remaining 'watchtowers' are shown as Alan Scott continues his speech.

The **Fortress of Solitude** has the **Metal Men, Tawky Tawny, Hourman, Liberty Belle, Damage, Blue Beetle** and **Supergirl**

Superbia has the **Ultramarine Corps,** another Morrison creation from his time on **JLA** and **JLA: Classified.**

Gorilla City being defended by **Freedom Beast** and others who are too vague to make out.

Glimpses of the few remaining bastions of hope, figuratively known as watchtowers.



Page 30 - Turpin finally gives in to **Darkseid's** will and gives a thumbs down to humanity.

Darkseid makes his intentions known to the world.

Pages 14-15 - Kalibak is seen leading an army of tiger men prior to the battle for Bludhaven. These are references to **Kirby's** tiger people from **Kamandi.**

Of note, you can notice some Apokolipian buildings in the background, indicating the passage of time and defenses that have been put in place.

First half of the assault on Bludhaven, featuring Black Adam, Captain Marvel, Iman, Blue Devil, Vixen, Bronze Tiger, Hourman, Liberty Belle and JAKE.

Page 15 - Captain Marv-pleads with **Black Adam** to help them stop Darkseid. **Alan Scott** is on screen telling everyone Bludhaven is their last stand.

Another watchtower is shown, this time the Great Wall, home of the **Great Ten,** Chinese superheroes who first showed up in **52**. Those shown include **August-General-In-Iron, Accomplished Perfect Physician, Ghost Fox Killer** and, I believe, **Celestial Archer**

Page 16 - Tattooed Man activates the circuit he was given by **Black Lightning,** revealing **Metron's** symbol of freedom.

Tattooed Man's circuit is revealed as the same one as Metron's.

FINAL CRISIS #5

Pages 01-06 - The word-weapon is the **Anti-Life Equation** and the machines that can rewrite laws of being is the **Genesis Box** from Morrison's **JLA Rock of Ages** story.

Also, the 'doomsday singularity' is caused by Darkseid's fall. A singularity references the center of a black hole and can warp time and space due to the intense gravity. This is likely the reasoning behind weeks passing on Earth and the trial on Oa just taking place.

Finally, the **Krona Protocol** is a reference to when Krona destroyed the Central Power Battery in **Tales of the GLC.**

Wonder Woman adorns the cover for Final Crisis #5.

Pages 16-17 - The battle begins as the heroes arrive. Those shown are as follows:

Captain Marvel, Rocket Red, Black Adam, John Stewart, Supergirl and **Iman** make up the fliers.

Vixen, Blue Devil and **Bronze Tiger** are on the hurricane, **Hourman** and **Liberty Belle** on the motorcycle, and **JAKE,** from the Creature Commandos, hoofs it on foot.

Frankenstein is riding the motorcycle in the center while **Wildcat** and **Wildcat Jr** are on the red motorcycle, **Red Arrow** is on the other one, and **Mr. America** and **Major Disaster** on the car.

Finally, it appears all of the vehicles are, in fact, the **Metal Men.**

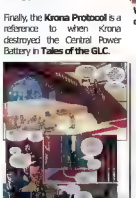
The second half of the image features Frankenstein, John Stewart, Supergirl, Rocket Red, Mr. America, Major Disaster and the two Wildcats.

Barry and Wally embrace and share a brief, "Flash Fact", moment before facing the Furies.

Pages 17-19 - Time has finally caught up to the **Flashes,** who were several weeks in the future at the end of last issue and we see the **Furies** attacking them.

Pages 20-24 - Green Arrow sacrifices himself so that everyone else can escape the **Justiliers.**

Page 25 - Mary Marvel delivers **Darkseid's** helmet. Alan Scott mentions the **Omega Offensive,** which refers to Checkmate's Black Gambit, as seen in **Final Crisis #6 and 7.** (For more on **Reverend Good's** "Day of Holocaust", see **FC: Superman Beyond.**)



Question is brought in to lead the new Global Peace Agency.

Page 07 - Checkmate is recruiting the **Question** for their last gambit. Why the Question? This is a nod toward the faceless **Global Peace Agency** operatives from **Jack Kirby's** original **OMAC** series, which the new Biomacs are also modeled after

Of note, **Morrison** confirmed that the bulk they refer to is what scientists refer to as the Bleed or barrier between different Earths in the Multiverse. I assume M-theory is related to Multiverse theory and higher dimensional branes refers to membranes between higher dimensions (aka other Earths). Basically, mumbo jumbo made up to sound smart.

Black Adam leads the attack against the Desaad possessed, Mary Marvel.

Page 18 - Iman's text translates as, "What hit me? Ah, s&#*"! My armor's useless. Weighs a ton... what would Superman do...?"

Of note, **Frankenstein** is quoting Milton.

Page 19-21 - Black Adam performs a sneak attack on Mary, but is prevented from killing her by **Captain Marvel.** It is revealed that Mary Marvel is possessed by a "fleering, old man" and, based on her perverted dialogue and actions, it's obviously the New God, **Desaad.**

Tawky Tawny joins the battle with his jetpack, as foreshadowing in earlier issues.

Pages 26-27 - The Flashes arrive at Barry's wife, **Iris Allen's,** place. Barry kisses her and sparks of the Speed Force free Iris of the Anti-Life corruption. It is never explained how, but it is speculated that the **Speed Force** is the opposite of Anti-Life, the Life Equation.

Pages 28-29 - Shilo Norman and the **Super Young Team** boom tube into Checkmate's castle. Norman is promptly shot while trying to explain the situation. **Mr Terrific's** speech bubble isn't a misprint. There's nothing in it due to the noise of the boom tube. Norman's skin colour, however, is a misprint. He should still be black.

The Speed Force frees Iris of the Anti-Life corruption as she and Barry kiss for the first time since he returned.

Pages 08-09 - Darkseid sends his new **Furies** (Wonder Woman & Co) to "end it all", most likely in response to the impending attack on Bludhaven.

Page 10 - The Justiliers are still attacking Checkmate's castle. **Donna Troy** is shown as corrupted by Anti-Life.

Pages 11-13 - Mister Miracle is shown to be alive, thanks to some body armour. We find out more about time and space warping as the Swiss border literally moves farther away.

Of note, Mister Miracle should be black and they have Sonny Sumo's face drawn as Miracle's in one scene.

Most Excellent Superbat delivers one of the funniest lines of the series when he asks what they will tell this man's fans after shooting Mister Miracle.

Page 22 - God's number is the minimum number of moves needed to solve a, and this is the part left out, maximally scrambled **Rubik's Cube**. You could solve a cube in 0 moves if it was already solved, for those wondering the difference.

Of note, for those that have read the **Seven Soldiers** series, the man in the wheelchair is, in fact, **Metron**. As for the monkey, it's either **Detective Chimp**, from **Shadowpact**, or the monkey at the typewriter from Morrison's **Animal Man**.

Nix Uotan remembers his magic word - the name of his love, Weeja Dell.

Metron solves the Rubik's Cube in under 18 moves and unlocks his New God powers.

Page 23 - The magic word Uotan was searching for ends up being the name of his female Monitor love, **Weeja Dell**, last seen in **Final Crisis #1**.

Page 24 - The **Mokkari** that shows up here is actually a member of the **Cult of Mokkari**, which has been referenced several times, but never shown. It's not the real Mokkari, who is bounding back and forth between **Batman** and **Darkseid** at the moment.

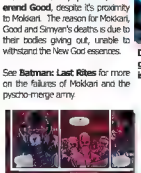
Metron solves the **Rubik's Cube** in under 18 moves and the ping sound is that of a Motherbox(xx).

Page 25 - Here, it is implied that **Lex Luthor** is the one that betrayed **Libra**, not **Calculator.** This is reference to **Oracle** claiming a high ranking villain gave them access to the Untemet.

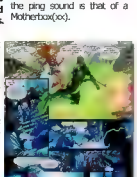
Page 26 - John's ring troubles are probably related to **Darkseid's** singularity or the troubles on Oa with the battery being shunted off to a pocket dimension.

The text bubble claiming **Mokkari** has failed is actually spoken by **Reverend Good**, despite it's proximity to Mokkari. The reason for Mokkari, Good and Simyan's deaths is due to their bodies giving out, unable to withstand the New God essences.

See **Batman: Last Rites** for more on the failures of Mokkari and the psycho-merge army.



I AM THE NEW GOD!



Darkseid's 'minions' bodies give out on them just as he is reborn.

Page 27 - You can actually see **Mary Marvel**, in shadow, coming up behind **Supergirl** in the first few panels.

Page 28 - The Multiverse is spiraling out of control, as seen with the multiple Earths.

Page 29 - The man with the president is **Father Time**, commander of SHADE.

Pages 30-31 - Darkseid makes the monologue of the year

Page 32 - Nix Uotan is reborn. The images in his 'sphere' depict scenes from this very issue. Also, his dialogue boxes are identical to the ones **Metron** used in issue one, possibly indicating he has been reborn as a **New God.**

Nix Uotan is reborn. His speech bubbles are identical to Metron's, implying he may be a New God now.

Batman gets to be on the cover of Final Crisis #6, just in time to die.

FINAL CRISIS #6

Pages 01-03 - This takes place after **Superman Beyond** and **Legion of Three Worlds**. The Miracle Machine is important for the simple fact **Superman** will rebuild it in the 21st century and use it to save the Multiverse.

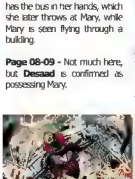
Also, if you look closely, the **Miracle Machine** is identical in shape to Metron's circuit. (For more on the Miracle Machine, see **Adventure Comics #367** and **Superboy #213**).

Pages 04-05 - The Ray needs to get back to Earth so he can trace the circuit into the planet's crust.

Planet Korll is the home of the villain, **Queen Bee.**

Pages 06-07 - Standard action scene. Some might not notice **Supergirl** and **Mary Marvel** fighting in the background in the bottom center panel. Supergirl has the bus in her hands, which she later throws at Mary, while Mary is seen flying through a building.

Page 08-09 - Not much here, but **Desaad** is confirmed as possessing Mary.



Mary is confirmed as being possessed by Desaad.

The Miracle Machine, also known as the ultimate deus ex machina, looks identical to Metron's circuit pattern.

Pages 10-13 - Captain Marvel uses a similar tactic to what brought **down Black Adam** in **52**, using his own lightning to transform Mary back to her human form. Her reaction was very similar to **Kid Miracleman's** reaction after his rampage in the **Miracleman** series.

Iman's dialogue translates roughly to, "Something approaches. Like the sound of horses.", probably in reference to the **Furies**, whom can be seen riding in in the background of the same panel.

Page 14 - This could be the origins of the peaceful tiger people civilization from **Kirby's Kamandi** series.

Page 15 - Yes, they've miscoloured **Shilo Norman** again. He should be black. Metron's circuit symbol is officially revealed as meaning, "freedom without restriction", and we're told it makes you immune to Anti-Life.

Pages 16-17 - The Furies attack, ending the heroes short lived victory and confirming Iman's words from a few pages back. Sonny Sumo's history is cleared up, as well.

Pages 18-19 - Tattooed Man's Metron circuit tattoo saves him from Anti-Life. The final panel on page 19 is probably further signs of the Bleed and Multiverse ripping apart due to Darkseid's actions.

Mister Miracle's skin is coloured incorrectly yet again.

Question becomes a template for the faceless Global Peace Agency, alla Jack Kirby's Kamandi series.

Pages 20 - The whole graviton superhighway is just mumbo jumbo for the **Atom's** are going to tour the Multiverse looking for a new Earth to inhabit. **Question's** comments imply this takes place after **Final Crisis: Revelations.**

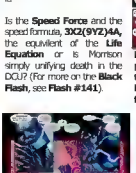
Page 21 - The **Omega Offensive** Alan Scott spoke of earlier is this **Black Gambit** moving a portion of the population to a new Earth in the Multiverse.

The Question templates literally sets up the **Kamandi** world that was run by the faceless **Global Peace Agency.** ...ord Eye is clearly a reference to **Maxwell Lord,** former leader of Checkmate and the man that stole Brother Eye from Batman. It's unclear if it is his brain in the sphere or not

Pages 22-23 - Libra does not die here, as there are plans for him in a future series.

Pages 24-25 - The Black Flash, co-created by **Grant Morrison,** was considered **Death** for users of the Speed Force. It's safe to assume he's implying a connection between the Speed Force and New Gods, also implied by Barry's nullifying Anti-Life with it.

Is the **Speed Force** and the speed formula, **3X(2(9YZ)4A,** the equivalent of the **Life Equation** or is Morrison simply unifying death in the DCU? (For more on the **Black Flash**, see **Flash #141**).



Batman confronts Darkseid in a scene eerily similar to Seven Soldiers: Mister Miracle #1.

Pages 28-29 - Batman RIP

Pages 30-31 - I'm not sure how **Lois** is up and walking about here, as **Superman** doesn't return from **Superman Beyond** and she shouldn't be healed until at least the next page.

Metron refers to **Mandrakk, the Dark Monitor,** from Superman Beyond as the greater menace if we breach the Bleed.

The **Black Gambit,** if you recall, is designed around breaching the Bleed and has been activated here by Lord Eye.

Libra "dies", but, as Sivana points out, it's definitely not the last we'll see of him as DC has expressed plans for future appearances already.

Page 26 - This scene mirrors the opening in **Seven Soldiers: Mister Miracle #1**, where **Shilo Norman** approaches. **Boss Dark Side** and offers his life to him.

Page 27 - Radion is the only known weakness of New Gods and is an exceptionally rare material

The Omega Sanction is a rechristened Omega Effect which, surprise, surprise, first showed up in Morrison's **Seven Soldiers: Mister Miracle** series. It causes the person afflicted to be reborn countless times with each life being more tragic and hopeless than the last until your very soul breaks.

Batman: RIP

Superman holds Batman's dead body in one of the definitive images to come out of Final Crisis.

Pages 32-33 - Superman returns and, while not immediately obvious, what he is shooting is the protective dome that covered **Command Bunker D.**

Oddly enough, **Hourman** is back up and about, despite being had ridden the page before.

Of note, the Bleed and Multiverse are collapsing even further with the dying **Darkseid** and due to the **Black Gambit** opening a hole in the Bleed.

Page 34 - Superman holds the Omega Sanction'd Batman's corpse.

The last bastion of hope is several watchtowers duct taped together.

Page 05 - The Watchtower is made up of parts of the **JLA Watchtower, Fortress of Solitude, Titans Tower** and a non-descript part, possibly the **Hall of Justice**.

The middle panel is made up of **Iman, Power Girl, Frankenstein** and **Starman**.

The **Metal Men** from Earth-44 are a robotic **JLA** created by a human **Red Tornado.** The significance of their arrival is to show that the Multiverse is breaking apart at the seams and the "crumbling shard from a parallel universe" that collided with the mishmashed Watchtower was a fragment of Earth-44 splintering into our own Earth in the form of the JLA.

The new Aquaman does something...completely unrelated to Final Crisis.

Page 12 - The Flashes, moving at superluminal speeds, pass through **Darkseid,** leaving his own **Omega Effects** to kill him and the **Black Racer** proceeds to take him in lieu of Barry.

There is a single panel of the new **Aquaman**, who comes from an unnamed Earth, saving Atlantis.

Finally, **Darkseid**, or possibly his host, **Turpin,** repeats what Orion told Turpin before dying in issue one. I believe this is referring to how death is a part of everyone, but if it is Turpin speaking, he's just grasping what Orion's words meant in relation to Darkseid.

FINAL CRISIS #7

Time and space are crumbling. What this means is that **Morrison** has chosen to reflect this distortion in his narrative, or lack thereof

The events of the issue are, therefore, out of order in what Morrison refers to as a 'channel zapping' format, whereby he jumps between narratives without any indications, similar to how you change channels on a television. Knowing this is going in will help you wrap your head around the pace and density of this issue.

Superman claims top billing on the final cover as he saves the Multiverse from Darkseid and Mandrakk.

Page 06-07 - Some of the artifacts present include: **Batman's** cowl, referencing his death. **Hawkman's** mask, foreshadowing his death later (or previously, seeing as time is broken at this point) in this issue, **Wonder Woman's** Wondra tusk mask, **Dr Fate's** helmet, what looks like a green lantern, and an unidentifiable dagger

The items being loaded into the rocket, which is obviously a reference to Superman's origin, include the final edition of the Daily Planet, a miniature Bat Signal and Superman's cape.

Lois and Jimmy load up a rocket in a nod to Superman origin.

Page 13 - Superman begins the designs for the Miracle Machine. **Iman's** dialogue translates roughly to, "He's going to restart time is all I've heard. To live in the world with a man like that." Also, Superman can be seen sitting in Metron's chair.

Page 14 - If you recall, **Checkmate Castle** was under attack while all the fighting was going on at Bludhaven. The **OMAC's** from **Final Crisis: Resist** finally make an appearance in this issue alongside the **Biomacs**.

The **Atoms** were placing a beacon to Earth-51 as part of the **Black Gambit** so that **Lord Eye** could open a rift in the Bleed to shunt a portion of the population to a new Earth.

The Atoms plant the beacon in the Bleed that will help Lord Eye open a portal to Earth-51.

Featured is a black Superman from Vathle Island and an updated Nubia, the black Wonder Woman from the Silver Age.

Page 01 - The black Superman president is designed to invoke images of the newly elected **President Obama** and his promises of hope and change virtues Superman also shares.

His command code to Brainiac, "Vathlo Prime", is a reference to **Vathlo Island**, an isolated, "highly developed black race" of Kryptonians that were first shown in **Superman #234**.

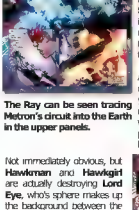
This unnumbered Earth represents a world with several black analogues to New Earth's heroes.

Darkseid mocks Superman, who's carrying Batman's corpse.

Page 08 - We've finally returned to where **Final Crisis #6** ended with **Superman** holding **Batman's** body. However, if you followed the narrative so far, we have now transitioned into **Lois Lane's** story for the final edition of the Daily Planet, effectively making this a flashback.

Page 09 - Darkseid is showing signs of his radion poisoning thanks to Batman's bullet.

Page 10 - "The roar of a gunshot yet to be", is a reference to **DC Universe #0** where **Barry Allen** hears a sound, "like a starter's pistol". This represents the sound of the gunshot **Darkseid** will fire back in time to kill **Orion** in a few moments.



The Ray can be seen tracing Metron's circuit into the Earth in the upper panels.

Page 15 - The most important part of this scene is **The Ray's** placement of Metron's circuit on the Earth. Also, you can see many of the people from Checkmate filing into a portal to Earth-51 before **Lord Eye** shuts it down.

Page 16 - The timeline of this page is a little wonky. The first panel with **Supergirl** is the present where she is telling the same story **Lois** is narrating to the children. This is on the mishmashed Watchtower from the opening parts of the book.

After that, the rest of the page plays out like the end **52 #52.** As such, you should read the page from right to left, similar to a manga, which seems appropriate as it's predominantly the Japanese heroes.

The Question has a way with words.

Page 11 - While not immediately clear, the **Omega Effect** beams that are chasing **Wally** and **Barry** are fired by the mob of people Darkseid has taken control of

Darkseid uses the Flashes' wake and the huge singularity forming around him to fire the same radion bullet that **Batman** used to kill him backwards in time to kill **Orion**, creating an time paradox.

Darkseid's last act is to fire the bullet back in time that killed Orion, effectively creating a time paradox.

Not immediately obvious, but **Hawkman** and **Hawkgirl** are actually destroying **Lord Eye**, who's sphere makes up the background between the multiple panels.

The final, "Boom", is actually a **Boom Tube** opening up and transporting everyone except Hawkman and Hawkgirl, who die here, to Earth-51.

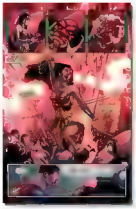
The universe collapses around the Super Young Team in this page reminiscent of 52 #52.

Overman holds Overgirl in a scene similar to Superman and Supergirl in Crisis on Infinite Earths.

Finally, a little oddly scripted, but **Overman** finds out from Question that **Overgirl**, whom he had been searching for, has died. She was last seen dead and was being operated on by **Checkmate**. It appears her body was transported to Earth-51 and Overman is seen holding it in a pose similar to Superman holding the dead Supergirl in **Crisis on Infinite Earths**.

Page 17 - This scene picks up after picking up the black **Superman** at the beginning of the issue. **The Question** is actually recounting the details of what happened to **Checkmate** last page to the assembled army of Superman on Earth-51.

Of note, in the second panel, **Sonny Sumo** indicates he's on his home Earth and during the time he has been gone, the **Great Disaster** has taken place. **Kamandi** can be seen standing near the destroyed Statue of Liberty.

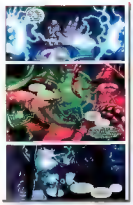


Free of Anti-Life's control, Wonder Woman chains the fallen god with her lasso.

The middle panel features **Supergirl, Iman, Stargirl, Frankenstein** riding a hellhound, **Cyclone** and **Power Girl**.

The bottom panels seem to be, whether intentional or not, a reference to **Women in Refrigerators**.

Page 21 - It's never quite explained how **Wonder Woman** breaks free of Anti-Life, but I assume it is due to the Ray's Metron circuit drawn into the Earth possibly weakening its hold on Diana. **Frankenstein** knocking some sense into her during their fight, the fact **Darkseid** is dying or a combination of them all.

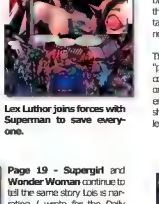


Superman plays God in a similar pose to the one who created the universe, as seen by Krona.

Page 25 - Superman preparing his wish actually depicts the scene that **Krona** saw at the beginning of the DC Universe - a giant hand above a spiralling universe.

Similar to his **All-Star Superman,** it seems **Morrison** is having Superman as the creator of his own universe, even if through a wish on the Miracle Machine this time around.

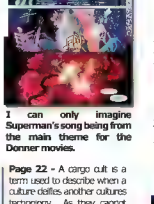
Superman actually makes his wish at this moment, despite the world not magically going back to the way it was right away. This actually summons **Nix Uotan** and the Superman army to him.



Lex Luthor joins forces with Superman to save everyone.

Also, many seem to mistake the **Wonder Woman**-crushing-mask panels as the past where she broke free of Anti-Life. This is the "present" and she is crushing the mask that was in the trophy room from earlier in the issue. The big image in the middle with the narration is the only image taking place in the past right now.

The final image is, again, the "present" and **Superman** is completing the final touches on the **Miracle Machine**. Everyone has been frozen and shrunk down at this point, leaving only him.

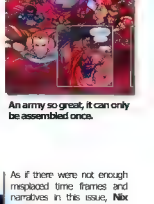


I can only imagine Superman's song being from the main theme for the Donner movies.

The strange creatures **Guy Gardner** is referring to are servents of **Mandrakk**. They appeared in **Final Crisis: Superman Beyond**, too. This scene takes place outside the singularity and the Earth is still fine, in their eyes.

Pages 26-27 - Apparently, **Dough Mahnke** just kept drawing until he hit the ends of the page, as there are more than 52 Supermen present for this final showdown.

Known Supermen include Superman, Apollo, Sunshine Superman, Samaritan, Mr Majestic, Overman, and the black Superman from the start of this issue.



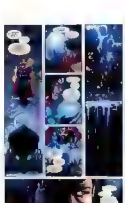
An army so great, it can only be assembled once.

Frankenstein unleashed trades in the motorcycle for a hellhound.

Page 19 - Supergirl and **Wonder Woman** continue to tell the same story Lois is narrating / wrote for the Daily Planet. Remember, this panel is in the future, in relation to the Superman vs Darkseid fight.

"Time for bed", refers to the next page, where we see **Superman** shrinking and freezing the survivors, similar to how **Kandor** was shrunk.

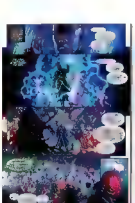
Morticoccus is what **Mary Marvel** infected **Wonder Woman** with back in **Final Crisis #3**. As **Frankenstein** is not a living creature, he cannot be affected by it and was the only hero able to fight back against Wonder Woman.



Superman steals fire from the gods to give light to the universe.

Page 22 - A cargo cult is a term used to describe when a culture deifies another cultures technology. As they cannot comprehend what it is, they believe it to be magic or some form of god-like object. What **Darkseid** is implying with this is that the **Miracle Machine** is actually just a cheap attempt at creating a New God **Mother Box.**

The sound **Superman** is referring to is the same as the one the black Superman that opened the issue referred to as the Question and other Superman arrived - the sound of the Multiverse.



The power of imagination unleashed overcomes the stagnant and parasitic story telling methodology.

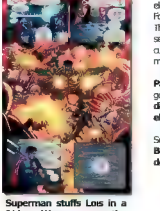
As if there were not enough misplaced time frames and narratives in this issue, **Nix Uotan** begins narrating a flashback to this final battle.

Page 28 - Nix Uotan notes he is heard **Superman's** signal, which was his wish, and has arrived to help.

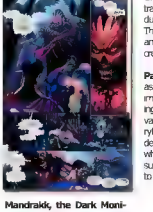
The gist of this scene is that **Nix Uotan** represents pure, unadultered imagination of story and **Mandrakk**, his father, is the grim and gritty age of superhero stories that preceeded him, which, like a vampire, fed on the imagination and original stories.

Page 20 - With the exception of the middle panel, everything takes place in the "present". **Superman, Wonder Woman** and **Supergirl** are busy shrinking and freezing everyone in a last ditch effort to save them before Superman completes the **Miracle Machine.** They are shrinking them with the same technology Braniac used to shrink Kandor.

Of note, **Supergirl's** speech is a touch metatextual, referring to this very issue and how the narrative is all broken up and also reflecting the way time is broken in the DC Universe at this point.



Superman stuffs Lois in a fridge. Women across the internet go crazy.



Mandrakk, the Dark Monitor, appears at Superman's darkest hour, just as he told him he would.

Of note the **Zoo Crew** were transformed into normal animals during their **Countdown** tie-in. The **Pax Dei** are the host of angels **Zauriel** is from and were created in Morrison's **JLA** run.

Page 29 - The cycle is complete as the son slays the father and imagination and original storytelling overcomes the parasitic vampire-like grim and gritty storytelling of the past couple decades, thus, "there is no limit to what I can do", as **Nix Uotan** summons more and more heroes to stop **Mandrakk**.

No one %$%$ with the Judge of All Evil.

Life goes on in this aftermath page.

Of note, the **Super Young Team** are officially recognized as the embodiment of the **Forever People** of the Fifth World. The word, "Baaru", was the word the original Forever People used to switch places with the **Infinity Man**, a role Nix Uotan is now taking up.

Morrison noted that, as the **Green Lantern Corps** has recently enabled lethal force use of the rings, it was only fitting that they be the ones to, legally, kill **Mandrakk**.

Modelled after the Silver Surfer's Shalla-Bal, Weeja Dell is Nix Uotan's dream girl he could never forget.

The map that **Nix Uotan** is holding is the same map **Jack Kirby** drew for the world of **Kamandi** post-Great Disaster and we are told that Earth-51 will host all of the Kirby creations in one place.

Page 33 - Monitor Tahoteh speaks of both **Final Crisis**, itself, the age of grim and gritty self-defeating storytelling and the story of the **Monitors**, who have become toxic to the very thing they strove to protect.

Page 34 - Morrison has stated that **Weeja Dell** was modelled and named after **Shalla-Bal**, the Nomm Rad's former love before becoming the **Silver Surfer**. Much like the Surfer, Weeja is the dream girl that Nix could never forget.

Page 30 - Lois Lane picks up the narrative again. Pictured on the right are mementos of people that died - **Batman** (the cowl), **Martian Manhunter** (his pyramid on Mars), **Hawkman** and **Hawkgirl** (two feathers, one for each).

The heroes are seen pulling the Earth by a chain similar to old Silver Age Superman stories.

Morrison also claims that the **Overvoid** is the blank page and the Multiverse is the ink. Basically, he is saying that the Multiverse should open up the DCU to limitless possibilities and the ability for creators to express themselves instead of falling into the same old grim and gritty and tried patterns.

Page 35 - It's fitting that **Superman** wishes for a happy ending, but it's also odd that **Superman Beyond** ended by saying these stories always end with a "To Be Continued".

Similar to the end of Final Crisis #1, Nix Uotan awakes at the end of this issue as a mortal.

This is the Kirby Page, paying tribute and setting up several Kirby related subplots.

Page 31 - The **Monitors** discuss the recent events and **Nix Uotan** tells them that the superheroes are the ones that saved the Multiverse and reassured the symmetry of the omery. This is depicted by a Silver Age throwback of the Green Lanterns and Superman army, literally, dragging Earth by a chain.

Of note, the two unmonitored Earths are for the vampire **Red Rain Earth-43**, obviously the Earth of **Rex Ogama / Mandrakk**, and the grim and gritty **Dark Knight Returns Earth-31**.

Page 36 - Mirroring the end of issue one, **Nix Uotan** awakes as a normal human. The radio or television indicates that the world now knows about the existence of the Multiverse.

Now we know where Batman got that giant T-Rex statue from...

Page 37 - Anthro, the First Boy, is now an old man. You can see the rocket of mementos **Lois, Supergirl** and **Wonder Woman** were filling earlier in the issue crashed into the earth.

Page 38 - Batman is shown to be alive and drawing cave paintings similar to those on issue one's alternate cover. It appears that, much like **Sonny Sumo** in the original **Forever People** series, Batman has been displaced in time by the Omega Sanction. Alternatively, the Omega Sandion may have ended with the death of Darkseid, leaving Batman stranded in whatever life he was currently forced to live.

Page 32 - The harness on the rock is that of **Orion**. **Metron** is seen without his chair, overlooking it. This scene is eerily similar to the scene in **Countdown #13**, which ended with a flower growing in the destroyed universe.

The second panel shows the original **New Gods** - Mr. Miracle, Highfather, Lightray and Barda.

Unknown to most people, but the shaded out characters in front of them are actually the new designs from the **Seven Soldiers** series. Many believed this meant the New Gods were back as their former selves when it was just a tribute.

Nix Uotan dissolves the Monitors, freeing the Multiverse to evolve on its own.

Reviews

Comic book reviews for the past month

FINAL CRISIS #6

Written by Grant Morrison
Art by Various

It's difficult reviewing **Final Crisis'** individual issues after the series has ended and especially after all the work I put in on it in the annotated article. I have the hindsight to see how everything eventually worked out and I've reread the thing like five times already to make sure I didn't miss anything for the annotations.

Add in all the research for specific links and reading obscure wiki articles and I've got **Final Crisis** coming out of my eyeballs. As such, it's become almost like an academic project that I've worked on and my opinion has almost run dry on it.

I do recall my initial impressions of this issue, in particular, and the so-called death of **Batman** and I was, honest to god, extremely pleased with Final Crisis for delivering so many excellent moments in one issue. Whether it was Batman confronting **Darkseid**, the intense moments as **Superman** returns or the epic battle for Bludhaven, it all just flowed extremely well and I was anticipating the final issue with glee.

That said, I know how issue seven turned out and you can read my review of that issue for my thoughts on it, but knowing how Batman's death is reversed and my initial, "WTF?", reaction to issue seven's channel zapping format left me despising the entire thing moreso than the middle chapters of this event.

Verdict - Must Read. Batman dies, you have to read it whether you're a fan of it or not. However, for what it's worth, this is easily the best issue of the series, regardless of how the event turned out, and, when I read this, it was the first time I was honestly blown away by this event.

DARK AVENGERS #1

Written by Brian Bendis
Art by Mike Deodato

This is probably the best work **Bendis** has put out since this whole Skrull nonsense began. I, honestly, can't believe this issue was written by Bendis. Aside from a few, brief moments of Bendis-speak, I could have sworn this was just an extention of **Ellis' Thunderbolts**. It even had **Deodato** on art to complete the illusion.

That said, the plot is actually fairly simple in that **Norman Osborn** takes over **Iron Man's** job as head of the world's defense. **SHIELD** is dismantled and Norman heads the new **HAMMER** organization taking its place. He quickly goes to work putting together a new Avengers team and this one is made up of **Sentry**, **Ares**, **Bullseye** as Hawkeye, **Moonstone** as Ms Marvel, **Venom** as black costume Spider-Man, **Daken** (Wolverine's son) as Wolverine, **Noh-Varr** as Captain Marvel and **Norman Osborn**, wearing one of Tony Stark's left over armours, as Iron Patriot.

The issue consists of Norman going from person to person recruiting them for the new team and I was surprised at how entertaining it was. Bendis was in top form with his dialogue and it felt far more natural than his work has been in months.

Verdict - Must Read. With no love for Secret Invasion, I was hesitant coming into this, but Bendis and Deodato blew me away with this opening issue. Will definitely be around for more of this series.

Reviews

Comic book reviews for the past month

FINAL CRISIS #7

Written by Grant Morrison, Art by Various

As I said in my **Final Crisis #6** review, I'm reviewing this issue with the gift of hindsight, which is odd, as my reviews are usually littered with day one gut reactions that leave little room to sit on or re-read an issue or series.

I do recall my initial reaction to **Final Crisis #7**, though, and it was far from pleasant. I think I went through several different emotions as I went through the issue and more than once threw the comic down in disgust and wondered how the hell this made it to print before picking it back up and continuing on.

I've spent a lot of time reading and re-reading the series and I think I can honestly say, when it's all said and done, that I actually enjoyed it. Unlike many fans, I don't think this was difficult to understand or that people are 'dumb' for not getting it or anything as ridiculous that. I believe people have come to expect certain things from these universe spanning, linewide summer events and, unlike Marvel, who catered to the fickle mob, **Morrison** simply wrote his story for himself first, which is what all good writers should do.

Comic fans, however, are quite resistent to change and anything different is instantly rejected by many of us, myself included. I don't think **Final Crisis** was ever written to be read in a monthly format and many of us bag, board and never see the comic again for years. While many of us believe ourselves infalliable and could never fathom not remembering previous issues, the series actually reads so much better on the second or third go around, moreso if you take the time to explore the innumerable minute details.

While I've almost taken on a macro Final Crisis series review so far, this all applies to **Final Crisis #7** moreso than any other issue in the series. In fact, I have more notes in my annotations about this issue than the other six issues and I ended up trimming some excess fat while I was editing. Many of the problems I, myself, had with the initial read are actually rendered moot after realizing the actual timings of certain events.

One such "error" that annoyed me was **Wonder Woman's** mask in the trophy room, set in the present, when she smashes it later in the issue during a flashback. There's no indication of the change, but the panels showing her smashing the mask were actually set in the present, after everyone was frozen, and she actually took the mask from the case after the fact. I wasn't complaining that the issue was bad simply because of this misunderstanding on my part, but many small self-thought inconsistencies like this all added up to leave a bad taste in my mouth.

Add in the fact people don't like feeling stupid and have grown accustomed to simply reading the comic, bagging and boxing it and never having to really think about it and I believe much of the initial knee jerk reactions are based on not stupidity, but simple ignorance and resistance to the fact they didn't get what they were promised or expected from this series, which is a blessing and a curse for the story.

Verdict - Must Re-Read. Is this the greatest comic ever written? No. Will re-reading the series make you like it more? Debatable. But I imagine many will have a newfound appreciation for the craft and what Morrison was trying to accomplish with it afterwards, regardless of whether they end up liking it more or not.

Reviews

Comic book reviews for the past month

GREEN LANTERN #37

Written by Geoff Johns
Art by Ivan Reis

Combined with last month's issue and the recent **Rage of the Red Lanterns** one-shot, **Green Lantern** is finally kicking ass and taking names again. After months of merely being "good" and seemingly treading water, Johns and Reis have exploded with non-stop action and it finally feels like the same book we were reading back during the **Sinestro Corps War.**

For those out of the loop, **Sinestro** has been captured by the **Red Lanterns** and Hal, who's teamed up with the first **Blue Lanterns**, is caught in the middle. With this issue, we're treated to what I would equate to the **Sinestro Corps War Special** that kicked off the SCW epic. Hal has arrived to find Sinestro crucified by the **Red Lanterns** and is quickly ambushed by said Red Lanterns. Just when things look bleak, the Sinestro Corps arrives to free their leader, leading to what will surely be the first of many multi-coloured battles in the months to come.

While it sounds like the issue was merely an action junkies wet dream, there's all kinds of foreshadowing and hints about the upcoming war of light, ranging from **Atrocitus'** predictions of Hal betraying and killing the **Guardians**, which even Sinestro claims will happen, to the Blue Lanterns outright statements that Hal must become a Blue Lantern.

Oh, and we mustn't forget the shock ending where **Hal**, in a fit of rage after the death of former Green Lantern **Laira** at the hands of **Sinestro**, is selected as the newest Red Lantern, ending our issue with an image of him wielding both a green and red ring in his spiffy new Red Lantern Corps costume.

Verdict - Must Read. It's great to see Green Lantern return to the heights it once reached and the past few issues have renewed my faith and interest in the upcoming Blackest Night.

JSA #23

Written by Geoff Johns
Art by Jerry Ordway

I had been anticipating this **Black Adam** centric storyline since **Johns** first started hinting at it back in early 2008. Considering how amazing the **Tomasi/Mahnke** Black Adam mini-series was, I had high hopes coming into this for more of the same.

I know Johns is responsible for most everything that has happend with Black Adam since his early days on **JSA**, but what I ended up getting in this issue was a pale shadow of the **Black Adam** and **Isis** I had come to know over the past few years. Adam and Isis' personalities are two dimensional and their motivations for acting this way feel like I'm reading a Silver Age comic where they're evil for evil's sake.

Another problem I had with the issue was the fact it was trying to be several different things at once with no flow or direction. It wants to be an epilogue for the **Gog** storyline, but never fully fleshes it out, only giving the briefest of glimpses at the fates of several characters. It wants to set up the new Black Adam storyline, but with the way the characters act, it's hard to really relate to them or feel anything other than bewilderment over what happened to these two amazing characters' personalities.

I rarely talk about the art of books, as I typically take it for granted, but **Ordway** comes off as trying too hard to look like **Eaglesham's** work and I found, while it was serviceable, many of the faces, particularly Black Adam's, just looked terrible and distracted me while reading this issue.

Verdict - Check It. I wanted to love this issue, as Black Adam has become one of my favourite characters over the years, but everything he did and said just felt wrong for some reason. The flow of the issue greatly impacted the readability and I just hope the storyline picks up over the next few issues.

Reviews

Comic book reviews for the past month

THUNDERBOLTS #128

Written by Andy Diggle
Art by Roberto De La Torro

While the opening two issues of **Diggle's** run on **Thunderbolts** were more or less just treading water and wrapping up Ellis-related plotlines, he truly makes the book his own with this issue. Where **Bendis** seems to be aping Ellis' style for the **Dark Avengers**, it looks like Diggle isn't content to just follow what came before and he's taken the book in a similar, but unique direction with his first issue into the **Dark Reign** era and I'm thoroughly impressed with what I see so far.

Where **Dark Avengers #1** simply went through the passes of introducing each character on the team, one by one, Diggle goes with the slow burn approach and is gradually introducing the new members of his team, starting with **Yelena Belova**, the third Black Widow who supposedly died in the Savage Land in the opening **New Avengers** arc. The flashback to her recruitment was quite impressive and **De La Torro** did an excellent job illustrating one scene where Belova disarms and kills two guards. It had a very cinematic look about it, yet maintained comic book-like feel. Osborn has set up Belova as his new team leader for this covert Thunderbolts team and her death is retconned as merely her faking her death. I honestly thought they would have just made that other Belova a Skrull, but I didn't feel cheated by the explanation we got either.

The other members introduced this issue were **Ant-Man** and **Ghost**, the latter of which shows up briefly and had a better introduction over in Dark Avengers than here, but I imagine we'll learn more in future issues.

One aspect that impressed me was the seamless guest appearance of the newly elected **President Obama.** It doesn't feel like a cheap publicity stunt like it did in the recent **Amazing Spider-Man** issue and it worked extremely well. My only complaint is that with how advanced the government's funding is for things like **SHIELD** and **HAMMER**, they have the president flying on a regular Air Force One plane when everyone and their mother in the Marvel Universe seems to have their own Blackbirds with cloaking and various other features. Not something I dwelled on, but odd to see, nonetheless.

Finally, the best part of this issue is the appearance of Leonard Samson, who's advising the president against Norman Osborn and even has tapes of his **Moment of the Year** worthy rampage at Thunderbolt Mountain in last year's **Caged Angels** arc. Diggle nails Osborn and Samson's dialogue perfectly and it's one of the best scenes I've read this year. Osborn knows Samson has him and uses his new Thunderbolts to manipulate the situation to frame Samson and the political maneuvering of each character as they try to one up each other is handled well.

Verdict - Must Read. Dark Reign seems to be doing everything right coming out of Secret Invasion and it's been a while since I've been this impressed with the direction of the Marvel Universe outside of their cosmic line or Captain America.

Reviews

Comic book reviews for the past month

NOVA #21

Written by Dan Abnett & Andy Lanning
Art by Wellinton Alves

The **Nova** bullet train just keeps on going as this issue continues with the revival of the **Nova Corps**. While I'm not thrilled with the massive influx of new Novas, which dilute the main character's appeal somewhat and detract from the introduction of the first batch of Nova recruits from a few issues ago, I can see that **Abnett** and **Lanning** have something planned here and that all is not right with the **Worldmind**, warranting putting up with the sudden introduction of the new centurions.

While the plot is pretty straightforward - **Nova** is asked to give up the Nova Force, refuses and later has it taken away from him by force - the trip more than made up for it. With the exception of Nova's annoying brother, I loved just about every bit of dialogue and interaction from this issue, especially when **Reed Richards** and **Worldmind** get into their tangent on the science of how the planet-like **Ego** is not affecting the Earth with its gravity.

However, the big shock of the issue, which the cover hints at, is **Nova** being stripped of the Nova Force and expunged from the Corps. While many could see it coming, the thing that is shocking to me is that I can't tell if Worldmind is the one in the wrong or if Nova is actually succumbing to the stresses of bearing the entire Nova Force or not. As it is, it looks as if the now powerless Nova will have to seek out some new means of getting around the universe. My guess is we see Quasar's ghost/energy form joining up for a temporary power up until Richard either regains his Nova status or the **Worldmind** is freed of **Ego** or whatever is influencing him.

Verdict - Must Read. Just another great issue of Nova.

The End?

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That's all for **TMC - The Monthly Crisis!** I hope you all enjoyed the magazine format. I put a lot of effort into it to make up for the lack of updates recently.

For those who have no idea what this magazine is, my name is **Kirk Warren** and I run the **Weekly Crisis Comic Book Review Blog** (www.weeklycrisis.com). I recently disappeared for about a month with personal problems and the blog fell by the wayside. I had planned to post a fake magazine update for my **Best of 2008** awards and, with most of it already finished when I returned after my disappearance, I decided to roll some reviews and the odd article into it to make up for the downtime.

Before I let you all go, I just wanted to thank my brother for the help with editing and let everyone know, unless people are interested in more like this, that this magazine format was a one time deal and you needn't worry as you'll still be able to find me online at the **WeeklyCrisis.com**, updating with news, previews, reviews and, of course, the moments of the week every week.

Thanks for reading and feel free to visit **www.weeklycrisis.com** and let me know what you think about the magazine, its contents or anything in particular!

- Kirk Warren
The Weekly Crisis